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Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 ACDA-07 ARA-06 /104 W
----------181440Z 060240 /50
R 181105Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO SECSTATE WASHC 6097
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USINT BAGHDAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ABU DHABI 1491

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS : PFOR, ET, US
SUBJECT : ERITREAN DIALOGUE

REF: (A) ABU DHABI 1457 (NOTAL, (B) ABU DHABI 1421,
(C) STATE 100281, (D) ABU DHABI 1231 (NOTAL

SUMMARY: SABBE CALLED AGAIN ON DCM MAY 18. HE HAD EXPECTED MORE THAN LARGELY ONE WAY DIALOGUE, BUT GENERALLY ACCEPTED CONDITIONS AND OFFERED SEVRAL FURTHER OBSERVATIONS. OPTION OF FURTHER CONTACT CONFIDENTIAL

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REMAINS OPEN, BUT WE DO NOTANTICIPATE RENEWAL HERE IN IMMEDIATE FUTURE. END SUMMARY.

1. OSMAN SALEH SABBE CALLED ON DCM AGAIN MAY 18. DCM BEGAN BY EXPLAINING NATURE OF HIS CALL (REF B) TO ADAM AHMED--(I.E., THAT HE (DCM) HAS SAID HE WAS PREPARED TO MEET WITH SABBE AGAIN IF REPEAT IF SABBE

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IN TOWN)--EXPRESSING HIS CONCERN THAT PERHAPS MESSAGE MIGHT HAVE COME THROUGH AS SOMETHING MORE THAN THAT. DCM THEN RELAYED MESSAGE PARA 1 REF C AS OFFICIAL RESPONSE TO SABBE'S EARLIER REQUEST FOR DIALOGUE, STRESSING THAT ROLE WAS VERY MUCH ONE OF LISTENING RATHER THAN HAVING DESIRE TO TALK IN RETURN.

2. SABBE RESPONDED THAT INDEED HE HAD GOTTEN MESSAGE THAT HE SHOULD RETURN TO ABU DHABI IMMEDIATELY, AND HE HAD DONE SO, COMING HERE FROM IRAQ(HIS NEXT STEP AFTER JIDDA) INSTEAD OF GOING TO KUWAIT AS PLANNED. HE EXPRESSED UNDERSTANDING, HOWEVER, FOR USG POSITION ON "DIALOGUE" AND DID NOT APPEAR PARTICULARLY DISTURBED AT DISRUPTION OF HIS TRAVELS, NOTING THAT IT ONLY MEANT LOSS OF ONE DAY.

3. SABBE THEN TOOK UP INVITATION TO ADD TO POINTS HE HAD MADE ON LAST CALL. HE COMMENTED THAT RUSSIANS WERE TRYING TO SAVE ETHIOPIAN REGIME AND SPECIFICALLY WERE TRYING TO PROMOTE COMPROMISE BETWEEN GOVERNMENT IN ADDIS AND ERITREAN POPULAR FRONT (EPF). HE CLAIMED THAT PDRY WAS PLAYING ROLE IN THIS EXCERCISE WITH MEETING HAVING BEEN HELD IN ADEN ON MAY 7 BETWEEN EPF REPS (RAMADAN MUHAMMAD NUR, HAILE MAKARIOS AND TWO OTHERS) AND ADENIS (ADDIS REGIME NOT DIRECTLY REPRESENTED). SABBE STATED THAT EPF HAD ANNOUNCED PUBLICLY (INTERVIEW IN A KUWAITI NEWSPAPER) THAT IT COULD NOT MAKE DEAL SEPARATE FROM OTHER ERITREAN GROUPS. HOWEVER,
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ACCORDING TO SABBE, THERE HAD IN FACT BEEN SECRET AGREEMENT THAT LIBYAN AND SOVIET ARMS WOULD BE SUPPLIED TO EPF VIA ADEN, WITH INTENT BEING FOR EPF TO USE ARMS TO DEFEAT ELF AND ELF/PLF.

4. SABBE CLAIMED THAT EVEN PRIOR TO MAY MEETING IN ADEN 20 TONS OF ARMS HAD BEEN SENT BY SMALL BOATS TO EPF WITH LANDING TAKING PLACE ON SUDANESE COAST. SABBE OUTLINED SUDANESE POLICY TOWARDS EPF AS MISGUIDED. HE CLAIMED GOS WAS TRYING TO BALANCE LIBYAN AID TO EPF WITH ASSISTANCE OF ITS OWN, THIS IN HOPE THAT EPF WOULD BE PERSUADED NOT TO INVOLVE ITSELF IN INTERNAL SUDANESE POLITICS. GOS WAS ALSO ENCOURAGING EPF TO JOIN WITH ELF AND ELF/PLF ARGUING THAT EPF WOULD THEN BE IN MINORITY POSITION. SABBE CLAIMED HE HAD TOLD SUDANESE PRIME MINISTER RASHID EL TAHIR THAT THIS POLICY WAS SHORTSIGHTED, THAT EPF ONLY TELLING GOS WHAT IT WANTED TO HEAR AND WOULD EVENTUALLY USE ARMS IN MANNER CONTRARY TO SUDANESE INTERESTS.

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5. SPEAKING OF HIS CURRENT TRIP, SABBE CLAIMED SAUDIS
WERE PROMISING SUBSTANTIAL ASSISTANCE--THOUGHT THEY
HAD NOT YET DELIVERED. IRAQ HDB SAID WAS PROVIDING AID
TO ELF AND ELF/PLF. IRAQ HAD TRIED TO PERSUADE EPF
TO WORK WITH OTHER TWO ERITREAN GROUPS BUT HAD FAILED.
AS RESULT, IRAQ WAS NOT PROVIDING AID TO EPF.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 ABU DHABI 1491

6. SABBE THEN ASKED DCM WHAT WAS US POLICY TOWARDS
AREA. HE SAID THAT NEXT SIX MONTHS WOULD SEE DECISIVE
DEVELOPMENTS. PERHAPS ERITREA WOULD GAIN INDEPENDENCE
AND ETHIOPIAN REGIME WOULD BE TOPPLED BY OTHER OPPO-
SITION FORCES; PERHAPS ADDIS REGIME WOULD COOPERATE
WITH EPF OR OTHERWISE SUCCEED WITH SOVIET AND CUBAN
HELP IN CRUSHING MODERATE ERITREANS. WHAT WOULD HAPPEN
WAS NOT CLEAR, BUT NEXT SIX MONTHS WERE KEY. DCM RE-

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SPONDED THAT USG WAS INDEED CONCERNED ABOUT AREA AND
WATCHING SITUATION CAREFULLY, HENCE OUR INTEREST IN
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LISTENING TO WHAT SABBE HAD TO SAY. BUT WE WERE NOT
GOING TO GET INVOLVED IN WHAT WAS CLEARLY REGIONAL/
ETHIOPIAN PROBLEM. OUR CONSISTENT POLICY WAS THAT
SUCH MATTERS SHOULD BE HANDLED ON A REGIONAL BASIS.
SABBE MADE PASSING REFERENCE TO POSSIBILITY OF INCREASING
COMMUNIST INFLUENCE IN AREA, BUT DID NOT REALLY TRY TO
KEEP ISSUE OPEN.

7. IN PARTING, DCM MADE POINT THAT ABU DHABI WAS RATHER
REMOVED FROM HORN OF AFRICA AND ISSUES INVOLVED, MAKING
CONTINUATION OF DIALOGUE HERE NOT VERY SATISFACTORY. SABBE
ACKNOWLEDGED POINT AND MENTIONED THAT HIS ORGANIZATION
HAD GOOD CONTACTS IN JIDDA, BEIRUT AND DAMASCUS WITH
US EMBASSIES AND WITH OTHER SUCH AS ITALIANS. BUT
SABBE STILL STATED THAT HE WOULD KEEP EMBASSY ABU DHABI
INFORMED EITHER DIRECTLY OR THROUGH HIS REP HERE, ADAM
AHMED. NOT WISHING TO PUSH HIM IN DIRECTION OF ANY
OTHER EMBASSY, DCM AVOIDED FURTHER COMMENT.

8. COMMENT: AS BEFORE, OTHERS IN FAR BETTER POSITION
THAN WE TO JUDGE WHETHER SABBE'S FURTHER COMMENTS ON
ERITREAN SITUATION ADD UP TO ANYTHING. AS FOR FUTURE
CONTACT, GIVEN ONESIDED NATURE OF EXCHANGE, WE DOUBT
THERE WILL BE IMMEDIATE PRESSURE FOR ADDITIONAL
MEETINGS.
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